OUTREACH & SUSTAINABILITY: A STATEWIDE REPORT

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Produced by Interoperability Montana

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ABOUT THE OUTREACH & SUSTAINABILITY TOUR

Interoperability Montana began its 2009 outreach program on August 5 with a meeting in Townsend that doubled as an update on the Limestone tower site in Broadwater County.

Over the next 90 days, the IM outreach team (including state employees from the state's Public Safety Services Bureau) traveled through virtually every county and sovereign Indian nation in Montana, conducting outreach meetings and making other special presentations. A list of meeting locations (by town) is contained on page 16.

IM's goal was to engage two groups of people in each locality:

> ***Decision makers**
>   (city, county or tribal government leaders)
>
> ***Potential users of the IM system**
>   (law enforcement, fire, DES, EMS and others)

A typical outreach meeting (unless time was restricted) consisted of a presentation of the full "Interoperability: Let's Talk" presentation by Ian Marquand and Kevin Bruski. That presentation was followed by a question-and-answer session led by Kevin. Ian recorded attendee comments, either on flip-chart paper or on a legal pad. He then compiled them and separated them into four categories:

> ***General Comments**   ***Planning & Governance**
> ***Construction, Equipment & Operations**   ***Sustainability**

By the numbers, the tour included the following:

> *Number of meetings & special presentations made:* **41**
>
> *Special presentations (without PowerPoint or with a shorter version):* **8**

> > * Montana EMS Assoc. Conference, Billings   * Montana DES Conference, Lewistown
> > * Montana Assoc. of Counties Conference, Helena   * Montana APCO Conference, Missoula
> > * Anaconda-Deer Lodge Commissioners   * Great Falls City Commission
> > * Butte-Silver Bow Council of Commissioners   * Yellowstone County Fire Council

> *Counties represented at meetings (not counting MACO conference):* **52**
>   (With the MACO presentation, we believe we have reached leaders in all 56 counties.)
> *Counties not represented (not counting MACO):* **Meagher, Prairie, Chouteau, Liberty**
>   (A meeting with Meagher County will occur in January.)
> *Sovereign Indian nations/reservations visited:* **6**
>   (A meeting with the Chippewa-Cree on Rocky Boy's Reservation is tentatively set for early January.)
> *E-mail addresses collected for mailings and future communications:* **308**
>   (Not all attendees provided their e-mails.)

COMMENTS ON IM: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The IM team received hundreds of comments on various subjects. However, some common themes emerged, which are summarized here.

- Cities, counties and other local jurisdictions need to know the annual cost of sustaining the IM system, both statewide and for each individual jurisdiction. Many are hesitant to offer suggestions for funding before knowing these costs.

- IM should look to finance sustainability with a broad-based mechanism that touches as many people as possible, including non-users of the system. Specific recommendations that received multiple endorsements include an addition to the state fuel tax, additional fees for tourist services, and taxes on motor carriers or fireworks.

- The IM concept has widespread support across the state, although that support often is qualified by concerns over cost and continued local control of the system. There is a broad desire to keep local control. It should be noted that a handful of jurisdictions distrust IM's decision-making process or are unhappy with the progress of construction and/or the location of construction thus far.

- Local government leaders and potential users of the system have many questions about IM's planning process, construction buildout and system operations. There has been a lack of available and reliable information for local governments. There also is some misinformation about the system circulating around Montana.

- Potential users need more information about what kind of radios to purchase and what features are needed to interact with the IM system. Some are worried they already have purchased the wrong radios while others are confused about what they should purchase next. Local public safety providers also worry about the cost of trunking-capable radios, especially for small jurisdictions like rural volunteer fire departments.

- The fire service community—especially rural volunteer fire departments and districts--has many questions and concerns about the IM system, some based on information that has come to them from out of state. Concerns include perceived costs of radios and annual sustainability, the effectiveness of trunking technology, and the impact of IM upon well-established and excellent mutual aid protocols.

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COMMENTS ON IM: SYSTEMS & SUSTAINABILITY

The following pages contain the comments we received during our outreach meetings, as well as the location where each was received. If a particular comment was heard at more than one meeting, that is noted. We also have attempted to group comments from different meetings together if they relate to the same subject.

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GENERAL COMMENTS

IM is of "paramount" importance. (Townsend)

MHP needs it here because of dead spots for Mobile Data Terminals. (Townsend)

We "relish" getting new sites in Madison County and can provide money to maintain them. (Dillon)

We're in full support of this project. (Hardin)

Even with questions and concerns, it's still a great system; just need to solve money issues. (Roundup)

We want this program to go forward. Other people do, too. (Billings)

Identify jurisdictions who don't participate so their citizens know they're not part of it. (Billings)

IM is a good concept; Show me specifics on cost and control. (Baker)

IM needs a written piece on the benefits of the system—"what will it bring?" (Circle, Glendive)

This system affects every person in Montana. It's important. (Glendive)

We all want to communicate well. (Shelby)

Over 20 years, our communications needs will grow. Once the system is up, there will be more capacity. (Kalispell)

Every issue and failure in my 36 years of law enforcement was in communications. (Kalispell)

The system works very well when it works, but we've had lots of small issues. (Kalispell)

IM is a good program, but we worry about the budget and replacing radios. We also doubt it will help us in day-to-day operations. (Glendive)

It's a great idea; we need to see results. (Eureka)

Trust issues are still with us and will remain until we see the system work and can see whether it's really an improvement over what we have now. Until people see it work, they'll continue to be skeptical. (Eureka)

The Western Consortium has little confidence in IM at the state level. Our community's direction to DES and emergency services is "don't waste a lot of time on this." IM is "a joke." (Hamilton)

Consider "nice to have" vs. "need to have." We can't imagine using it and doubt it will ever happen. (Circle)

Garfield County likes the idea of IM because of Search & Rescue, especially in Missouri Breaks where coverage is poor. (Circle)

Glasgow hospital shooting showed need for IM— cellular traffic caused tremendous difficulty. (Circle)

Our county commissioners support the project. (Glasgow)

What will this system do to help us and improve our communications? We have good communications with local jurisdictions now. (Fort Peck)

Will this replace all of our current systems? (Fort Peck)

What have we contributed to the system up to now? Where has the funding come from? Who pays for our portion of the Roosevelt County sites? (Fort Peck)

It's a good program and we need it because our public safety people say we need it. (Fort Peck)

Gallatin County fire services see no need for IM. (Bozeman)

Current mutual aid works very well and we can prove it. (Bozeman)

The needs of fire services and law enforcement are different. Fire may have issues with the IM system, but law enforcement would use the system more. (Bozeman)

How does this improve what we already have for fire? We don't see any advantage. (Hamilton)

Each fire district has equipment that works. We don't want to screw that up. (Missoula)

Fire departments have little use for it, except for mutual aid. We can't afford expensive radio systems. Fire and EMS won't come on until we have money for new radios. (Kalispell)

Fire departments will get better coverage and might want to embrace it (Kalispell)

We've seen the Fred Cady and Cascade Fire Council letters. Have you answered them? (Wolf Point)

Everybody in the fire community wants another tool in their box, whether it's a hammer or communications. (Wolf Point)

Dave Mason (of the Fire Services Training School) likes the IM system. (Wolf Point)

Information on the specifics of IM isn't getting to our local level in the fire services. (Missoula)

Is this system more for supervisors instead of tactical people, especially in the fire services? (Missoula)

As a fire chief, I can't talk across the fence to the town departments in Malta or Harlem. We also have an issue with the county, since our radios are digital and theirs are analog. It feels like we've actually gone backwards with new digital radios. (Fort Belknap)

We have big issues with fires along the Canadian border. Different provinces have different levels of communications technology. Alberta is advanced; Saskatchewan is not. (Havre)

Narrowbanding has worked well at Fish & Wildlife for interagency fire communications. (Plentywood)

Powder River County used DHS money to make improvements. Now that money goes to IM and we've received nothing. (Miles City)

How do Homeland Security grant funds flow now— do the counties give their share of that money to IM? (Wolf Point)

Don't repeat mistakes on frequency sharing made when Highway Patrol went statewide 20 years ago. (Baker)

We need it for our ambulance service. (Baker)

We don't see it helping our ambulance service. We've had maybe two incidents in the last ten years where it would have helped. (Glendive)

There are benefits to sheriff and EMS; IM can save lives on long hospital runs. (Eureka)

Our ambulance can't call back to Shelby when it's on a run. It can't even call Glacier County. (Shelby)

In West Yellowstone, we can use the Idaho interoperable system to talk to EMS ambulance or rescue helicopter all the way to the hospital in Idaho Falls. It works very well. (Fire Chiefs Conference)

Let's all use cell phones instead of IM. Coverage will be the same and cellular companies will pay for the construction and maintenance of the system, so we won't have to. (MACO Conference)

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We've had issues communicating in mountain areas of our county where even cell phones won't work. Cell phones are not the solution. (MACO Conference)

In an emergency, cell phones are the first to go down from too much use. (Plentywood)

In Missoula and adjacent counties, telephone exchanges don't match up with jurisdictional lines; calls are routed to wrong county or jurisdiction; 9-1-1 can't always see the caller's location on local maps. Is anything being done to fix that issue? Can IM provide information on the location of the responder? (Missoula)

9-1-1 confusion on Northern Cheyenne Reservation—calls don't go to correct entity. (Lame Deer)

What other states have similar projects? Is there competition among the states for funding? (Browning)

IM should make a presentation to the Montana-Wyoming Tribal Leaders Association at one of its monthly meetings. This is especially important since some nations will have new leadership following this fall's elections. (Fort Belknap)

Having Kevin Bruski and Roger Smith on board has made a huge difference in the last year. (Kalispell)

Tribal Fish & Game officers often are first on the scene of incidents and should be able to use IM. (Browning)

Why would people in Conrad want to talk to another part of Montana? (Shelby)

Emphasize "public safety" instead of "interoperability." (Havre)

Is IM mandatory? Do we have to change over to it? Do we need to change over? (Browning)

Will it cost Indian tribes to join the system? (Ft. Belknap)

We've never had this project explained to us like this before. Thank you. (Crow Agency)

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PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE

I've heard about this system for a long time, but I can't get my questions answered. Most important, do I want to be part of this system? (Fort Belknap)

Please provide an article on IM for our tribal newsletter so our people can know more about this project. (Fort Belknap)

How would IM affect Northern Cheyenne/Crow cellular phone initiatives? (Lame Deer)

Will IM system solve our "deflection" issue into Canada? (Glasgow)

What's Canada's opinion of this project and concept? (Scobey)

Is the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks a part of this project? (Havre, Scobey)

IM is not a "bottom up" organization. We've never approved work on the Northern Tier or any other location. Where's the representation? (Hamilton)

We've done planning and tried to get MOU's with our neighbors. Where's our share of the buildout? (Hamilton)

We're frustrated because we do our planning work for IM and get no response from IMPD or staff. (Hamilton)

We need help with engineering & site planning in Ravalli County. We've gone in circles over tower sites. Ones we've eliminated keep coming up in discussions. (Hamilton)

When do consortia elect project directors? (Browning)

IM is not a grass-roots organization; no one here agreed to form a consortium; Eastern Tier Consortium is under-represented in build-out plans; there's been little progress in this part of the state. (Baker)

Buildout favors counties with Interstate corridors. (Baker)

If buildout money went directly to counties, more progress would have been made. (Baker)

A state-run communications system won't work. (Baker)

Build in Bighorn County before Fallon/Prairie counties. They don't support the system and we do! (Hardin)

US Hwy 212 corridor needs coverage. (Hardin)

Cover more than US 212 corridor. (Lame Deer)

Make sure you serve populations, including reservation populations that need access. (Lame Deer)

How will routes in Southeastern Montana be chosen? "Gray line" routes on the map seem to be "Indian" and "non-Indian." (Lame Deer)

No cellular service on Northern Cheyenne Reservation—make us #1 priority. (Lame Deer)

Proposed "gray lines" through Powder River County are adequate. (Miles City)

Who will solve issues between local dispatch and BLM fire dispatch? (Miles City)

What happens if counties don't sign up to use the system once it's built in their area? (Glendive)

What should be done with Garfield and Petroleum Counties? They have very few people spread over large areas. Should you build elsewhere first? (Circle)

Should IM finish Northern Tier and Western Montana and leave the east for last? It would allow partnership work with Mid-Rivers. (Circle)

No area should sacrifice its connection to IM because of low population. (Glendive)

Will work in the Eastern Tier be done by the SCIP's goal of 2014? (Glendive)

We can't reduce number of repeaters. (Circle, Columbus)

Who owns the tower sites? (Dillon)

Beaverhead County needs coverage in Big Hole area. (Dillon)

Could Tester appropriation request for work in the southeastern part of the state put the Big Sky 11 Consortium up next? (Hardin)

What if our county put up $300,000 for Radio Hill—would you build it? (Hardin)

Can we address dead spots in Bighorn Mountains? (Crow Agency)

Will IM fill in radio dead spots on the Blackfeet Reservation? (Browning)

How can you fill in "white space" around Opheim? Can you expand the Northern Tier system to cover everywhere in the consortium? (Havre)

What role could fiber optics play in IM? What would happen if a fiber line is cut accidentally by a contractor or someone else? (Lewistown)

Can National Guard help establish the system in our area? (Missoula)

Has MT Dept. of Transportation been working with ITSD on Geographic Information Services? (Missoula)

Are state agencies participating? Will they use IM? (Missoula)

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Are airports (and the FAA) included in IM planning and execution? Searches for aircraft create communication problems. (Missoula)

What's the discussion with the Forest Service and BLM? Both manage huge tracts of land. (Missoula)

What's DNRC's attitude toward IM? It would be nice to talk to them. (Glendive)

What's happening in talks with Canada about cross-border interoperability? (Havre)

Are electric and telephone cooperatives a part of this? (Fort Peck)

Fort Peck-Roosevelt County were to be a test platform for a new Mobile Data Terminal system. Where is that project? (Fort Peck)

How confident are you about finishing the project by 2014? (Glasgow)

Will the Opheim part of the buildout be happening soon? What will happen to Opheim if it's not accepted into the Northern Tier? (Glasgow)

Westby has very poor coverage. Could it be included with Opheim in the next grant request? (Plentywood)

Our fire district extends ten miles into N. Dakota. They have our channels on their radios and can hear us, but they can't talk to us directly, so there's a time lapse in communications. Westby site would help that situation, and would help us talk to Canada. (Plentywood)

If new funding for border projects doesn't come through, what will you do about Opheim? (Wolf Point)

When the Eastern Montana master controller is installed, will you make a backup ring for the Eastern Tier? Without multiple rings for backup, you will have problems. (Wolf Point)

There's a significant coverage hole in northern Roosevelt County and southern Daniels County along Poplar River. If IM could get a repeater in there, it would help. (Wolf Point)

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CONSTRUCTION, EQUIPMENT & SYSTEM OPERATIONS

How complicated will using the system be? Will there be training? What kind? (Circle, Butte, Dillon)

Is there redundancy along the system? (Miles City, Roundup)

What if we abandon local repeaters and IM goes down? We need backup. (Dillon)

Could an earthquake in southern Montana disable the entire system? I've heard that. I've also heard that in Hurricane Katrina, the old systems out-performed the new ones. (Fort Belknap)

Is "one big system" more vulnerable and easier to disable? (Billings)

Can the system overload? (Butte)

When will the Northern Tier be tested for maximum use and potential overload? Has it been pushed to the limit yet? (Pablo)

How do you switch from one recipient to another? How is it different from what we have now? (Pablo)

Can we get more time with Roger Smith and get trained on connecting and dis-connecting things on the microwave for our county, separate from Northern Tier? (Wolf Point)

Can a master controller be moved in an emergency? (Fort Belknap)

Too many users will create a problem. (Baker)

Statewide SOP's are needed. (Baker)

When do you expect this area to be able to use the system? (Plentywood)

What if North Dakota doesn't go with the kind of system we have? We can still talk to them, right? (Plentywood)

We see articles about failures in trunking. (Kalispell)

Trunking is a wide-area system for coverage and for inter-discipline communication. It's not for communications within a local discipline. IM should explain that. (Wolf Point)

Will the system be all digital? (Fort Belknap)

Will analog system—like our road department's-- be completely eliminated if we go to IM? Can you use analog radios on the system? (Shelby)

Changing radios sounds complicated. If you add a radio, do you have to re-program all other radios in your jurisdiction? (Shelby)

We're concerned about the amount of time our employees will spend programming radios, which may be in a farm combine or a grain truck. Shelby)

Does everyone know how to do fleet mapping? It's not our top priority and we all have other, more important things to attend to first. (Shelby)

Which radio models are operational with master controller and fleet mapping? (Dillon)

What can you do to help jurisdictions who don't have adequate radios? Will IM provide guidance on what radios we need before we have to buy them? How about advice and training on how to use them? (Hamilton)

What's involved with fleet mapping and why wasn't it done before now in the Northern Tier? (Eureka)

Do we need permission to use a frequency for the Interop channel? Will there be one specific frequency to use? (Browning)

We'll need to have someone local to call when we need service. (Browning)

How quickly can IM get a repair person on site? (Circle)

What happens if repair resources are all on-scene in the west and a problem develops in the east? (Circle)

What is the life span of new Motorola radios? Will they still work when IM system is finished? (Havre)

When will Hill County be on-line? Who will go on the system and when will they come on? Will IM hire someone to oversee that? (Havre)

Who would a local service person work for? How many would be on the Northern Tier? (Havre)

We need someone local to do radio programming. We've had to re-do code plugs because of software upgrades and will have to do it again when we can talk to Canada or if there are other changes. (Havre)

I bought radios a year ago, but I don't know what we really need. Are the new radios what we need? What radios could we buy in six months that will work now and last awhile? (Fort Belknap)

Will any more money come to tribes for radios once the IM system is built? (Fort Belknap)

Who should be on the system and who should get what kind of radio? (Fort Belknap)

Will grants be available to get radios upgraded? (Wolf Point)

At U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we've had lots of issues with P-25 radios. Maybe we moved to digital too soon. (Plentywood)

Can any P-25 radio use the system? Say, a Kenwood in Divide County, N. Dakota? (Plentywood)

The local Rural Electric Cooperative wants to upgrade radios. Should we switch to cell phones or continue with radio communications. What's the cost of upgrading? (Plentywood)

Teaching 18-year-old or 20-year-old fire fighters to use new radios isn't easy. (Plentywood)

What does "backwards compatibility" mean to us in rural fire? We prefer lighter, cheaper analog radios for volunteers. (Roundup)

I'm on the county 9-1-1 board. There's concern among EMT's about when older radios won't work anymore. (Wolf Point)

What make/model of radios should we purchase? When will information on radios be on the IM website? (Glasgow)

When will Motorola send us our code plugs? (Glasgow)

Can we get help on our SOP's from Hill County? (Glasgow)

Will there be any impact on our dispatch centers? (Eureka)

Will counties have the ultimate authority to remove problem users from the system? (Baker)

Would the state overrule a decision to "pull the plug" on somebody? (Baker)

The existing tower at Culbertson has limited space and we need to connect our local system there. The highway patrol and M-DOT are there now, but they may leave. Is there enough space? Can the tower be extended? (Wolf Point)

When will buildout of Antelope Butte happen? (Wolf Point)

Can Nemont Telephone help with infrastructure in this area? (Wolf Point)

Mid-Rivers Communications wants to partner. We support public safety; your microwave is more expensive than our fiber. Don't duplicate our network and end up competing with us. (Circle)

Can you work with Mid-Rivers or Verizon to expand coverage for northern Wolf Point coverage? (Wolf Point)

Will IM hook into Northern Cheyenne towers? (Lame Deer)

What would our county do if construction money runs out, the system is declared "complete" and we're not covered? (Miles City)

What about frequencies? Will more become available? We're really loaded up with radio traffic here. (Hamilton)

If county allows frequencies to be shared, will county give up ownership? (Baker)

Can towers be used to centralize dispatch? (Glendive)

We want to communicate with feds on fires— inability to talk to a retardant pilot put our people in danger during an incident. (Glendive)

Will placement of 2nd master controller attract renters of tower space? (Glendive)

Any change to state "color channels" and mutual aid? (Roundup)

Can DES use Brown Channel to talk from Fort Harrison to field staff on mobile radios? (Fire Chiefs Conference)

Will Mobile Data Terminal broadband be on system? That capability would be nice. (Billings)

How much money will it take to finish the Northern Tier project? (Scobey)

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SUSTAINABILITY COMMENTS

Because of the large number of comments we received on this topic, and because of the importance of this subject, we have grouped similar comments together with headings.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

How much will sustainability cost per year? (Asked at virtually all meetings.)

County must know exact costs of system. (Hardin)

I appreciate you guys tackling sustainability now. (Eureka)

Why wasn't sustainability addressed in the beginning? (Dillon)

Is IM getting suggestions from areas where the system already is active? (Browning)

When will the IM sustainability plan be ready and in place? (Wolf Point)

BROAD CONCEPTS.

Financing sustainability will be a combination of things. (Kalispell)

How many agencies and jurisdictions in total will use the system when it's done? Together, they probably won't contribute enough for sustainability. (Wolf Point)

Make funding source ongoing, not one-time. (Butte)

System support must be statewide. (Butte)

The cost of sustainability doesn't seem to match the benefits of the system. More cost than benefit. (Hamilton)

The argument for sustainability funding should be that if it's important for the state, we must raise the money. (Havre)

What would you do if grant sources dry up? (Havre)

Strive for fairness among large and small jurisdictions--concern for small ones. (Lewistown)

No one area should sacrifice, even voluntarily, so another can be helped. (Glendive)

How will sustainability survive changes in state and federal administrations? (Miles City)

Who is the biggest user? Fire Departments use a lot of resources, along with law enforcement. (Kalispell)

I have a concern about cumulative impact of tax hikes on citizens. What happens when the feds or the state put additional taxes on top of the fees IM charges? Or what if the feds or the state tap those sources first? Could IM charge something on top of that? (Scobey)

ISSUES SURROUNDING LOCAL FUNDING.

If the bulk of money to build the system has come from the state and federal governments, then local jurisdictions should step up for sustainability. (Havre)

Don't force counties to compete with one another for money. (Butte)

Don't rely on county or fire district taxpayers to foot the bill—money isn't there. "We're not going to fund this." (Butte, Bozeman, Circle, Roundup, Glendive)

Eastern Tier counties won't necessarily agree with any tax/fee/membership dues idea. (Baker)

IM will increase costs and taxes—why support it? (Bozeman)

Fire departments must have access to money for radio purchases—they don't have money and many don't have taxing authority. (Lewistown)

If costs go up, disciplines won't use IM. (Dillon)

IM will save money over the long term, since locals won't have to replace systems. (Billings, Dillon)

Locals don't like unfunded mandates—IM looks like one. (Columbus)

We don't want to impose more taxes, but services cost money. (Eureka)

Will IM end up costing us more than we're spending now on communications? If so, why? (Eureka)

Counties don't want a "surprise bill" once the system is built. (Baker)

Counties could offset part of statewide costs, but we need to know the dollar amounts involved. (Eureka)

Difficult to ask small jurisdictions like fire & dispatch, who operate on a shoestring, to pay into the system now. (Eureka)

What happens if the system is built and operating in our county, but we find we can't afford to contribute to sustainability? (Eureka)

"Tax someone else." (Townsend)

Outfit everyone with radios and equipment they need, then it's the locals' responsibility to repair or replace. (Butte)

Will other costs be reduced if we join IM? Or will county still have to maintain legacy system? (Columbus, Roundup, Circle)

A separate assessment for IM would be "tough sell" especially for counties already involved. (Dillon)

Give credit to counties who have done the right thing and already have spent money to improve its facilities. (MACO Conference)

Make sure there's equity among those who have spent wisely on communications and those who haven't—don't make "wise" jurisdictions subsidize the "unwise." (Glendive)

We've built and upgraded our towers; that's our contribution. We should be credited for that in any accounting for sustainability. (Missoula)

Don't let Billings/Yellowstone County get larger amounts because they made mistakes with compatibility—unfair to small counties who did the right thing. (Glendive)

If a county chooses not to join IM, they won't have to pay into the sustainability pot, right? (DES Conference)

We don't have any IM construction happening in our county and don't expect any in the near future. Do we have to pay? (MACO Conference)

Counties were suspicious of post-construction costs when we signed up for the consortium. The unfunded mandate is here, as we expected. What will that cost be? (Shelby)

Our fire service has no money to contribute. (Fort Belknap)

Locals can't re-direct money they spend now on communications. We have to keep our existing system for paging. (Wolf Point)

We can't dip into our own funds, but we can help with grants. (Fort Peck)

Kevin estimates sustainability to cost $8-10 Million per year. Would counties have to contribute on top of that? (Glasgow)

Will individual counties have to sustain the system? (Scobey)

Daniels County has county, state and city users. Would they all pay in? (Scobey)

Volunteer fire and ambulance services have no money, so don't put undue stress on them. (Scobey)

What is the county spending now on radios and/or the 9-1-1 system? (Scobey)

FAIRNESS IN RESERV ATION COUNTIES.

When making money available for local jurisdictions, be fair when offering funds to counties and reservations located within them. Counties always count reservation populations when applying for population-based funds, and end up with the lion's share of the money. Reservations get short-changed and don't get credit for their populations.
Example: Pondera County counts the Blackfeet Reservation residents within its county, but doesn't share money or resources it receives based on that population. (Browning, Fort Belknap)

Federal funds that come to states often don't make it to reservations. Please make sure we get our share. (Browning)

Equal contributions to sustainability should mean equal access to services or financial help. (Browning)

IM "DUES" BASED ON MACO DUES.

MACO-like dues structure not received well—no explanation on how money would be spent. (Billings)

MACO-type organization better than state bureau for spending sustainability funds. (Roundup)

Are MACO-based fees equitable for all? (Dillon)

Who's included in potential "members"? MACO-style structure in draft plan left out cities. (Lewistown)

If counties contributed $256,000 (MACO-based amount) could we go forward? (Dillon)

MACO had complicated systems on dues; we said base them on counties' taxable valuations, then establish tiers based on ability to pay. There now are 17 tiers or levels in MACO dues structure. (Plentywood)

"BASE + FEES" MODEL FOR COUNTIES.

Have all jurisdictions pay equal "base amounts," then add amounts based on population. (Billings, Havre)

Start with a "base fee" for jurisdictions, maybe using a tiered approach. Then add a monthly or annual fee for every radio on the system. It's the most fair way to do it. (Havre)

Would the "base fee" go into a statewide pot? (Havre)

Can you assess a "base fee" and a monthly user service fee? (Fort Belknap)

We agree with charging a flat fee, then a radio (subscriber unit) fee on top of that. (Glasgow)

STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDING

Are you looking at a certain per centage of federal contribution, state contribution and local contribution for sustainability? (Plentywood)

State should pay for most or all of the system and shift communications costs it's paying now. (Miles City)

Montana needs a statewide "coverage agency" funded by legislature. (Butte)

Let federal government pay for all or part—it's a federal mandate; there should be a federal funding source. (Bozeman, Roundup, Miles City)

Have feds pay for it all at first, then transfer responsibility as locals use it. (Roundup)

A lot of the onus should be on the federal government. Work through Nat'l Association of Counties to push the funding issue. (Shelby)

Partnership is important; federal government should play a role. (Kalispell)

How would state and federal agencies be billed—sliding scale? (Dillon)

Don't compete with tribes for same federal dollars. (Lame Deer)

Take advantage of tribes' "special relationship" with U.S. government—may be opportunities there. (Lame Deer, Fort Peck)

Can IM partner with tribes on stimulus money? (Crow Agency)

Is IM part of Sen. Tester's Homeland Security legislation? (MACO Conference)

Shouldn't Homeland Security provide more money to Montana because of our long border with Canada? (Browning)

Could Canada help with funding along the border? (Browning)

Can Wyoming pay for work along Montana's southern border, since it will cover northern Wyoming, too? (Miles City)

Don't let state or federal government pay for most of the system—state will "have its thumb on it" and "feds are worse." (Baker)

State funding is OK, but control of system MUST be kept local. (Roundup)

Turning IM over completely to the federal or state government would be seen as betrayal. (Kalispell)

Keep local control and be careful about asking "grass roots" for money. (Lewistown)

POTENTIAL FUNDING PARTNERS.

Create cooperative agreements with utilities, Western Area Power Authority, telephone cooperatives. (Crow Agency)

Can IM partner with cellular companies without charging one another for services? (Crow Agency)

Partner with cell phone, internet companies. (Townsend)

Can IM partner with private communications corporations that are bringing services to local areas, like Bresnan's new fiber networks in north central Montana? Would those partnerships make our area more "compatible"? (Browning)

Can Nemont Telephone help with sustainability? (Wolf Point)

POPULATION AS A FUNDING CRITERION.

Don't base formula on population—shortchanges less populous counties. (Butte, Miles City)

Don't base formula solely on population—it means larger counties will subsidize smaller ones—it's unfair to larger counties. (Billings)

Flat fee based on sites and populations could be fair. (Dillon)

Find fee based on county population, attached to something everyone uses. (Glendive)

Large population centers will benefit from IM and should pay more. (Eureka)

Base the contributions for sustainability on both population and land area. (Browning)

USER FEES.

If there is a user fee, it should be county-wide, not split among disciplines. (Roundup)

If user fees are chosen, must re-think plan before approaching counties. (Billings)

How would subscriber unit fees be assessed? On number of units, usage, tiered system? Think about fairness. (Dillon)

Since every radio on IM system must be authorized to use it, there should be a fee on every radio. (Havre)

User fees won't fund all of sustainability. (Havre)

I want to know more about service before I pay a fee. (Fort Belknap)

Is IM looking at sustainability on a "per radio" basis? In other words, what will it cost per radio on the system? (Glasgow)

What kind of user fee would you anticipate charging? (Glasgow)

A user fee is the best way to finance sustainability. Forget about prior contributions that counties have made. There should be no discounts based on past contributions. (Wolf Point)

"PAY TO PLAY" (USER FEES.)

If you use the system, you should help pay for it— "pay to play." (Crow Agency, Billings)

Forest Service law enforcement uses our system a lot. They should be made to "pay to play." (Missoula)

"USAGE" FEE (LIKE CELL PHONES.)

Base user fees on time used on the system—like cellular billing. (Dillon)

Could IM consider raising revenue based on usage of the system's main trunking feature? (Scobey)

Don't use "usage" as funding criteria—will punish responders, especially fire, who have to use it a lot while on incidents. Could even lead to dis-incentive to communicate. (Butte, Roundup)

9-1-1 FEE MODEL.

PSSB's 9-1-1 fee/excise tax model works well—do something similar for IM. (Butte, Fort Belknap, Plentywood)

Can we look to 9-1-1 fees as a funding source? (Missoula, Havre)

Place a surcharge on telephone service. Bozeman)

Will/could IM use 9-1-1 surcharge dollars or "stranded funds"? (Bozeman, Townsend)

Stay away from all 9-1-1 funds, including future increases. (Glendive)

GASOLINE TAX.

Finance IM with an addition to Montana gasoline tax. (Townsend, Dillon, Butte)

How much of a gas tax increase would it take to finance sustainability? We're in favor of that. (2 comments, Glasgow)

If there's an addition to the gas tax, exempt on-farm use. (Lewistown)

How much would revenue from a gas tax or bed tax fluctuate year-to-year? How would it compare to a flat fee? (Roundup)

Make IM a Montana project and finance it with statewide gas or telephone tax, not with user fees. (Butte)

Fuel tax is broader, more fair; also touches snowmobiles and motorcycles. (Eureka)

Press MT Dept. of Transportation for help on getting a one-cent raise in the gas tax for IM. If they don't help, don't let their radios on the system. (Havre)

Can M-DOT transfer an existing portion of the gas tax to IM? (Havre)

Any increase in the gas tax will get opposition from the contractors association and others who benefit from state construction and the large amounts of federal matching funds that state money brings. (Havre)

LICENSE PLATE FEES.

Counties have local option tax on license plates— legislature could authorize increase to fund IM. (Roundup)

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Add on fee to state license plates (Eureka)

Vehicle licenses now have an extra fee to finance Highway Patrol retirement; can there be a fee for IM, too? (Missoula)

Add 50 cents to vehicle license fees. (Havre)

I don't want any more taxes on license plates or fuel. (Wolf Point)

TOURISTS AS FUNDING SOURCE.

Must include tourists, since they cause a number of fires. (Lewistown)

Must find a way to get revenue from tourists; they create a lot of issues for us. (Kalispell)

Look at taxing tourists and motorists, but recognize that we don't have much tourism here. So those taxes will be paid almost exclusively by local people. (Wolf Point)

Charge non-residents (county or state) a fee if they're involved in an accident on a state or U.S. highway that requires the response of emergency services, i.e. Denver $600 "crash tax." (outside source)

Bed tax on I-90 & I-94 corridor. (Miles City)

Find a way to tap the tourists who require services from emergency responders. Work through a legislative interim committee. (MACO Conference)

It's better to have tourists pay to offset the costs of protecting them. (Glasgow)

OTHER SPECIFIC FUNDING SOURCES.

Adding to traffic fines is a good idea. (DES Conference)

Don't add fees to traffic fines or other justice court penalties—judges sometimes reduce base fine to lessen impact on fees on defendants. Counties lose fine revenues. (Great Falls)

Fee on hunters/anglers? (Miles City, Great Falls, Shelby)

Franchise fee on Cable TV. (Glendive, Miles City)

Assess "public safety fee" on all forms of insurance, including home and car. (Glendive, Scobey)

Create new tax/fee on fireworks. (Lewistown, Great Falls, Kalispell)

Put a public safety levy on statewide ballot and then stand up and fight for its passage. It should be designed to raise enough money to finance IM and cover any additional county costs created by the system. (Baker)

A public safety levy will fail, based on experience with local levies. (Butte)

Levy "public safety fee" on trucking companies; truck accidents common. (Crow Agency)

Oregon already levies fee on trucking companies for haz-mat response. (Great Falls)

Help us create a tribal "airspace use fee" for cellular companies. (Crow Agency)

Start talks between Crow Nation, IM and BNSF about a BNSF "public safety fee" to cross reservation. (Crow Agency)

Approach Dennis Washington, other wealthy individuals. (Crow Agency)

Place a tariff on Canadian trucks that enter Montana. (Wolf Point)

Cities need help achieving local option taxes that would help finance IM. If you can help us get local option taxes, we can use that money to help you. (Kalispell)

If we're interested in pursuing a local option tax as a revenue source, the MT League of Cities and Towns can be an ally. (Glasgow)

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Place an Interoperability fee on cell phones. (Kalispell)

Attach fee to railroad service; rail accidents create lots of problems and are expensive. (Eureka)

Will IM services/capabilities be available on an "a la carte" basis, where a user could pick and choose the services to use and then negotiate the price for them? This could include the cost of sustainability. (Missoula)

Place a tax on cell phone towers. (Hamilton)

Could the upcoming carbon "cap and trade" legislation offer tribes a potential funding source, i.e. selling carbon credits to industry or states? (Browning)

Place a duty on commercial vehicles entering Montana through ports of entry. (Shelby)

Consider a surcharge on state income taxes. If it's in the state's interest, citizens should step up and pay. This applies to all American citizens on issues of national interest, too. (Havre)

IM should ask the new wind farm company for a contribution. It has money to affect the area it's working in. (Havre)

How about finding contributions from the oil patch? There could be a disaster on an oil rig. Could oil and gas companies participate? Currently, local fire departments respond to problems and get no financial support from the industry. (Scobey)

Place a fee on oil/gas leases or on each rig. (Scobey)

Right now, a couple of local fire departments charge a fee for services—per hour, per person, per truck. (Scobey)

TOWER SITES & FUNDING ISSUES.

The number of tower sites in a county is not a fair way to determine the county's contribution. (Hardin)

Our county has four towers, but some counties have none. Those counties get the benefit of the system without the cost or responsibility. Where's the fairness in that? (Wolf Point)

If another jurisdiction wants to place something on our county's tower site, can we charge a local fee for that? (Wolf Point)

Be fair in considering costs, especially when it comes to the number of towers in a county. Hill County has several towers, Blaine has none, but both counties get benefits from them. So consider use as well as infrastructure. (Havre)

If non-locals' use of county tower increases county costs, they should re-imburse the county for the additional expense—especially power. (Baker)

Can towers be sub-leased to communications companies to generate revenue? (Great Falls)

User contributions would be reasonable, but not to maintain towers. (Kalispell)

What is the cost to the Salish & Kootenai Tribes for Jette site? Or to the Blackfeet Nation for Divide Mountain? (Fort Belknap)

Will we have to pay to maintain Antone Butte or WAPA sites? (Fort Belknap)

The BIA put in for stimulus money for the Antone Butte site and apparently received $170,000. We don't know where that money went, but could that be our "buy-in"? (Fort Belknap)

TOWER/SYSTEM MAINTENANCE ISSUES.

Who pays for fire, vandalism, catastrophe at sites? (Hardin, Crow Agency)

Will there be employment opportunities for Native people to work to sustain the system, i.e. repair & maintenance? (Lame Deer)

We'd prefer to maintain our sites ourselves rather than put money into a state fund. Our county still has to maintain all of our existing sites. (Eureka)

Who's going to pay to maintain tower sites? (Hamilton)

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If a piece of Motorola equipment fails in our building after that part of the Northern Tier has been accepted, who will pay for repair? (Havre)

Are the generators at IM sites in Valley County still the county's responsibility until the sites have been accepted? (Glasgow)

Our main concern is the maintenance of the tower sites in our county. County residents shouldn't have to pay those costs. (Glasgow)

Will IM station repair people around the state or hire locals to do maintenance and repair work? (Glasgow)

Where does the county's responsibility for maintenance end and IM's begin? For example, what if a strong wind blows over a tower? (Glasgow)

Any towers that are built in our county become county property, yes? So the county has responsibility for maintaining them? (Wolf Point)

Once sites are accepted, the infrastructure is turned over to the county, right? If any maintenance is needed, do we find our own vendors? We also may have an issue if something happens with our own local microwave system. (Wolf Point)

We want to offset our costs for maintaining the site and providing electricity and propane to it. This includes a site that is outside our county but that we have agreed to maintain. (Wolf Point)

Just operating a shelter alone, with power and propane has increased our costs. (Wolf Point)

I'm more worried about upgrading equipment, especially if the sustainability plan doesn't pan out. (Wolf Point)

What does the state of Montana spend now on communications? Could MHP and M-DOT drop their existing systems and re-direct those dollars to IM? What about other state agencies? (Wolf Point)

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THE IM OUTREACH TEAM:

Kevin Bruski, IM Executive Director
Ian Marquand, IM Public Affairs Officer
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Scott Bradford, PSSB
E. Wing Spooner, PSSB
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Chief Alan Michaels, Glendive Police Dept.*
Sheriff John Walsh, Butte-Silver Bow *
George Gupton, Mineral County DES Dir.*
Commissioner Mike McGinley, Beaverhead County
Bob McWilliams, Beaverhead County

* IM Project Director

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2009 MEETING LOCATIONS:

(In alphabetical order)

> Anaconda
> Baker
> Billings
> Bozeman
> Browning
> Butte
> Circle
> Columbus
> Crow Agency
> Dillon
> Eureka
> Glasgow
> Glendive
> Great Falls
> Hamilton
> Hardin
> Harlem (Fort Belknap)
> Havre
> Helena
> Kalispell
> Lame Deer
> Lewistown
> Miles City
> Missoula
> Pablo
> Plentywood
> Poplar (Fort Peck)
> Roundup
> Scobey
> Shelby
> Townsend
> Wolf Point